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ABSTRACT

Children's literature is an excellent medium to introduce global concepts and bridge multicultural understanding. Through the use of books, children can be helped to appreciate the commonalities and differences among cultures, to become aware of a relationship with self, others, and the environment, and to identify with the human condition. An initial point of departure for global education with young children is increasing their sense of dignity and self-worth. This theme in books helps children to gain self-acceptance. The concept of acceptance of others can help increase the child's understanding of cause-effect relationships in social interaction. Books should also be selected to teach worldmindedness, to show children that various cultures have more similarities than differences. The use of animal stories and folktales, on the other hand, can help children to grasp the concept of diversity among cultures. High interest books that are either picture books or easy to read can provide children with a perspective of the world according to another's point of view. And, books that address world problems can be used as a consciousness-raising exercise. (The paper lists and describes children's books for each of the concepts addressed.) (HOD)

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# Teaching Worldmindedness Through Children's Literature

—— Ann H. Stoddard

A recent revisitation of the 1918 Seven Cardinal Principles by educators indicated a need to move toward a citizenship education which includes the concept of worldmindedness. Both Shane (1976) and Gross (1978) suggest that children should begin to understand different cultures, social justice, interdependence and procedures for peaceful solutions to world issues. Intertwined also are problems involving limited resources, ecological abuse, and pollution.

Children's literature can be an excellent medium to use to introduce global concepts and to bridge multicultural understanding. Through the use of books, children can be helped to appreciate the commonalities and differences among cultures, to become aware of a relationship with self, others, and environment, and to identify with the human condition as it exists on this planet.

The most encompassing research data to date confirms that the use of literature is effective for teaching concepts. Analyses of data have led to several conclusions. First, children learn and retain more concepts than when using the basic textbook alone (Barrilieux, 1967 & Fisher, 1980). Second, the use of fiction can also cause change in children's feelings and attitudes (Divesta & Merwin, 1960; Edwards, 1972). This latter finding is somewhat qualified by a subanalysis based upon variables such as minority or ethnic groups. For example, more favorable patterns of attitudes toward minority or different ethnic groups were detected in children who were exposed to literature which portrayed a specific group in a positive light (Adam & Shadmi, 1980). Consequently, using children's literature can provide children with a more accurate picture of world reality and a sensitivity to cultural differences.

Five broad objectives have guided global education programs (Skeel, 1975). These guidelines are:

1. Accepting self and others
2. Increasing the understanding that cultures have both similarities and differences among each other and that they are interdependent.

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3. Increasing the capacity to relate positively to the benefits of diversity.
4. Improving the child's perception of the world.
5. Developing a sense of world problems and a responsible attitude toward society.

The breadth of these objectives allows for latitude in determining what specific books will be selected in a given grade level, whether it is animal stories, folklore, or fantasy.

## Accepting Self and Others

An initial point of departure for global education with young children is increasing the sense of dignity and self-worth. This theme in books help children to become self-accepting and to realize that they are fine the way they are.

Little Foot Through the Golden Gate (Gramatky, 1977) helps children in the development of a positive self and as an independent individual. Little Foot is fascinated by the harbor sights as he steams through the Golden Gate. He tries to imitate a sailing boat and a crab boat unsuccessfully, but soon gets a chance to be himself which he does gleefully.

Oliver, in Oliver Button is a Sissy (DePaola, 1979) doesn't like things that boys are supposed to do. Although he is taunted by his classmates, he does not give up his personal likes or career objectives. His commitment to self is strong and is supported by his parents and teachers.

The Animals who Changed Their Color (Allamand, 1979) is another picture book that focuses on acceptance of self. A polar bear, a whale, a tortoise and two crocodiles want to change their color to those of the rainbow. They cover themselves with parrot feathers and learn that original colors are far more practical.

Other books treating the idea of accepting self others are: Arthur's Nose (Brown, 1979), The Stone Cutter (McDermott, 1975), Dragon Franz (Konopke & Guggemos, 1977), and Of Cobblers and Kings (Sheldon, 1978).

## Understanding
## Cause-Effect Relationships

One specific problem contributing to children's fears is inadequate understanding of the cause-effect relationships in social interaction, that is, understanding and accepting others. Too often children have limited contact with persons of other cultures, or groups. An outgrowth of this problem is early formation of prejudices. In short, the concept of acceptance of others is extremely important in global education.

The picture book, Tom Cat (Bohdal, 1977), addresses how Tom handles this problem. He is classed as an outcast among cats because he doesn't hunt, but listens to fieldmice. He also understands the language of the hen, duck, and sheep. Finally he establishes himself as a interpretor between the cats and other animals.

A modern version of the fable The Ant and the Grasshopper is told with a new twist in Frederick (Lionni, 1966), the mouse who gathers the sun's rays and lazily dreams away the summer while the other mice store food for the winter. With the food gone, and the winter cold and gray, Frederick brings out his magic treasures. The mice respect his individual talent and imaginative contribution.

In Snowy and Woody (Duvoisin, 1976) a polar bear and a brown bear are taught by a wise Kitty to be friends and to help each other in need. They learn to camouflage each other when out of each's respective environment.

Nice New Neighbors (Bradenberg, 1977) describes a situation that occurs when the Fieldmice move in their new home. The children find that they are different and are rejected by other children. They decide to put on a play and eventually involve the neighborhood children. This story subtly carries the message of friendship and acceptance of others.

Other stories which tell of acceptance of others are: Sloan and Philamina (Stern, 1979), The Checker Player (Venable, 1973) and The Worst Person in the World (Stevenson, 1978).

## Similarities, Differences and
## Interdependence of Cultures

When selecting books for teaching worldmindedness, another goal to consider is that everyone in the world is interdependent and that the

various cultures have more similarities than differences. The common theme that runs through all cultures is humanity. Building on children's interests, the works listed below transform global concepts into colorful suggestive displays of human drama.

Little Blue and Little Yellow (Lionni, 1959) illustrates the multicultural facet of society. Two circular shapes, one yellow and one blue play together and become green. Not recognized by their respective parents they suffer an identity crisis until each dissolves into his component primary color. The families unite.

Another story, Green is Beautiful (Rogers & Watts, 1977) demonstrates the theme, variety is beautiful. The snake feels that only green is beautiful. The lion prefers yellow. Other animals feel that their color is the only beautiful color until a myna bird takes them on a journey through the jungle to a plateau where they enjoy a magnificant rainbow.

That's Mine (Winthrop, 1977), skillfully introduces the concept of interdependence. A boy and a girl learn from having trouble sharing their building blocks that cooperation and awareness of the potential of others can produce a bigger and better castle.

Also useful for teaching interdependence are: The Lion and the Bird's Nest (Kishida, 1979), Alligator's Toothache (DeGroat, 1977), Three Friends (Fremlin, 1975) and Fast Friends (Stevenson, 1979).

## Benefits of Diversity

Recent research (Chambers, 1971) has demonstrated that children understand the underlying structure of stories. They particularly relate to animal stories for the stories are not only interesting but generally are centered around uncomplicated characters combined with vigorous action. In addition, the problems encountered by the characters are often resolved with a happy ending. To help children grasp the concept of diversity among cultures and that peoples' behavior is controlled by their culture can be accomplished through the use of animal stories and folktales.

Who's in Rabbit's House? A Masai Tale (Dillon, 1977) combines both the animal story and folktale and is presented as a play. The clothing and habitat of Masai are authentically portrayed as the rabbit elicits help from passing animals in ridding his house of a threatening stranger, the Long One.

The Badger and the Fire Spirit (Campbell, 1977) is an ancient Indian legend that illustrates the power in the spirit of peace and brotherhood.

As in the Asian tale, The Lion and the Bird's Nest, the fable You Look Ridiculous Said the Rhinoceros to the Hippopotamus (Waber, 1966) speaks to the diversity found in cultures and to the novelty of an individual. The hippopotamus dreams that she has acquired the features of a variety of animals, each of whom has suggested that his fine point was lacking in her.

A young girl dreams of taking a trip to ancient Africa in Africa Dream (Greenfield, 1977). This delightful fantasy pictures Africa, its rich life, culture and its cities and villages. She enjoys eating a mango and shopping in a market place. Another story which shows Africa through the eyes of a Kenyan girl is I Am Eyes (Ward, 1978). The stimulating pictures of animal and plant life reveal a life of excitement and promise.

## Preception of the World

Young children tend to view the world only from their individual perspective, shaped by their experiences and interactions. It is important that they see the world according to other's point of view, and understand that each person is an individual yet belongs to a larger group.

High interest books that are either picture books or easy to read are a consideration to think of when selecting books. Illustrative of high interest books to help children see the world from other viewpoints is McDonald's book, The Little Island (1946), describes life on an island and the seasonal changes that occur. A kitten learns from his visit how to be "a part of the world and a world of its own".

Broderick (Ormondroyd, 1969), the mouse who can read, is very ambitious and wants to make his mark in the world. This story describes what he read and in what unusual manner he made his mark in the world.

Another book that helps children with intense appreciation of the world is Guess Who My Favorite Person Is (Parker, 1977). Watching a ladybug in an alfalfa field, a little girl converses with her companion. They began to choose favorite things such as sounds, colors, and textures.

## Common World Problems

Many problems face the world community -- pollution, overconsumption, energy, hunger and poverty, land abuse, population explosion and maintenance of world peace. The global perspective recognizes these common

problems and explores various methods to induce conscious raising. Although no one method is unique to achieving this global education goal, the use of the following books reflect several issues and can be used as springboards for discussions and other related activities.

Several stories present a timely message about pollution. Wump World (Peet, 1970) describes the happy life of the Wumps spent in the luscious meadows, crystal clear river and lakes. One day, this world is spoiled by the invasion of the Pollutians from the Planet Pollutus. In time, Wump World is spoiled and the Pollutians leave in search of a new and better world. Edith and Little Bear Lend a Hand (Wright, 1972), describes how two friends deal with the problem of litter in their city. Who Cares? I Do (Leaf, 1971) introduces pollution to young children. Through graphic photographs, the dangers are presented. There are also suggestions of how to save our land from destruction and how to improve the environment. Where Can the Animals Go? (Wegen, 1978) demonstrates the plight of animals as encroaching civilization, pollution and land abuse threatens their way of life. Children will readily see the need for a cleaner earth and conservation.

Two stories which address hunger and can lead to discussion of international understanding and cooperation in the world today are The Giant Who Swallowed the Wind (Cuncliffe, 1980) and The Mouse and the Magician (Houghton, 1979). The first story gives an account of the local giant, usually friendly who swallows the wind because he thinks he is not fed enough. Disaster occurs to the windmill owners until Bob Miller thinks of a clever way to solve the problem. The second story captures the feelings of a cold and hungry mouse outside on the window sill watching a magician inside having his tea. The mouse wants in, but the magician has other ideas. After several unpleasant encounters, the mouse is safe and settled.

The development of greed is the theme of The Lost Kingdom of Karmica (Shulevstz, 1979). The kingdom is lost through greed. When the king discovers that a massive glowing stone is precious, digging it out becomes more important than all the forests and farmlands swallowed by the hole.

Foreman's two stories, Dinosaurs and all That Rubbish (1974) and War and Peas (1974), initiate the ideas that peoples of the world all face problems of survival and of providing for their basic needs. Dinosaurs ... in allegory fashion, tells about man destroying nature in

in order to conquer the world. A political parody, War and Peas, addressing hunger and greed, is not too sophisticated for the very young.

## Summary

The impact of children's literature on perceiving global education concepts can be a worthwhile experience. Teachers can use books to lay the groundwork, then follow through with questions, students' sharing of feelings and experiences, and additional activities.

One distinctive feature of using children's literature is that it provides the impetus to question stereotypes and existing myths and to modify or eliminate them. Children tend to identify with the principal characters and grow with them as the story progresses. They become more willing to recognize the contributions of other cultures when exposed to impressive fictional reading materials.

Children's literature helps teachers provide a unique approach to introduce and to focus on global concepts. It is also an innovative and stimulating way to organize successful learning experiences.

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